

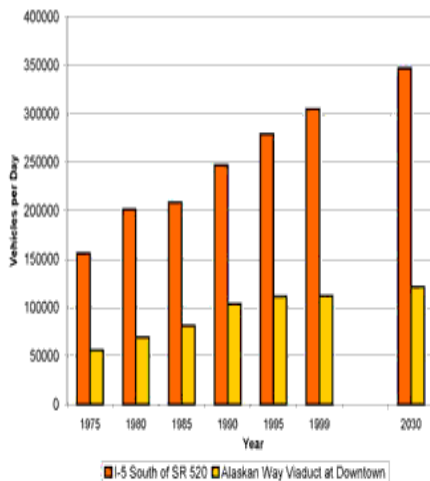
SR 99, Alaskan Way Viaduct

Background

There is an urgent need to replace the 48-year old Alaskan Way Viaduct (SR99) because of its age, seismic vulnerability, and critical role in the region's transportation system. WSDOT and the City of Seattle have joined to conduct an intensive and expedited study of options to either retrofit or replace the viaduct as soon as possible. The study results, including environmental impact information, will be used to make project decisions and begin preliminary design with an aggressive goal of entering a design-build RFP contract in the fall of 2003.

The Alaskan Way Viaduct carries significant traffic in and out of downtown Seattle and also serves as a major corridor for through-traffic. Built in 1953 with a capacity of 65,000 vehicles per day, the viaduct today carries up to 110,000 vehicles per day. That is almost a third of the volume of traffic on I-5, the other major corridor through downtown Seattle. Shippers and haulers, transit riders, and auto commuters all rely on the viaduct.

Traffic Volume and Growth on I-5 and the Alaskan Way Viaduct



➤ Alaskan Way Viaduct Carries 1/3 of I-5's Volumes

Above



Below



Project Update: October 2001

View the three conceptual alternatives selected on October 15, 2001. Public open houses have been scheduled in November – find out the details for attending a meeting.

Age and obsolescence are major issues for the viaduct. Damage to the viaduct from the Nisqually earthquake in February 2001 underscored its seismic vulnerability and created widespread recognition of the urgent need to retrofit or replace the structure. Also of concern is the relationship between the viaduct and the City of Seattle seawall area along the city waterfront; the seawall's condition could have an effect on how the viaduct program should be defined and carried out.

Following the earthquake both WSDOT and an independent expert panel conducted a structural review and seismic assessments of the viaduct that was delivered in June 2001. Meanwhile, WSDOT contracted for emergency repairs to be performed at a cost of approximately \$2 million. The repair program, largely complete, necessitated vehicle weight restrictions and frequent traffic closures on the viaduct that inconvenienced the public, especially truckers and bus riders who were displaced from their normal routes for extended periods.

A Unique Community Planning Process

Mayor Paul Schell and Transportation Secretary Doug MacDonald have convened a volunteer leadership team of civic, business, freight, and neighborhood representatives to serve as a sounding board in an expedited process. This process will develop and refine engineering and design solutions for the corridor in parallel with preparation of an environmental impact statement.

Some of the important planning issues include the connections that the viaduct makes to north and south sections of SR 99, as well as to critical arterials serving downtown and neighborhoods. The Colman Dock ferry terminal, and rail, truck, and ocean freight shipping terminals and yards are among the important transportation facilities the viaduct serves.

Public Involvement

The viaduct planning process involves many opportunities for public participation. This includes public meetings and workshops, community briefings, information materials, and this website. If you would like to schedule a presentation or share your ideas with us, please contact us.

What is being done to protect the environment?

Preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is now underway as part of the overall study and planning effort. Various discipline studies (e.g., noise impacts, air quality impacts) will be commenced shortly and their results made available to the public and to decision-makers. Particular emphasis in the planning study is also being placed on urban design and land use considerations so that they can be clearly evaluated and understood as part of the basis for decisions about the final direction of the project.

Partnership

The Alaskan Way Viaduct project is being developed through a partnership between WSDOT and the City of Seattle. Both agencies have a stake in the outcome and have come together to coordinate efforts, make decisions jointly, and work with the public on transportation, neighborhood, and urban design issues.

Government-to-government tribal consultation process

This process is not applicable because the project does not impact tribal lands.

Financial Information

Even prior to the stepped-up attention to the viaduct resulting from post-Nisqually earthquake seismic concerns, funding had been provided for preparation on an Environmental Impact Statement. Current thinking about the project is that a significantly greater funding amount must be provided so that in the course of the 01-03 biennium, substantial progress can be made on engineering and design issues. This will permit the project to be brought up to the point where a design-build RFP can be begun and, we hope, a design-build contract entered into in late 2003. To pursue this program, WSDOT has asked the state legislature to make a supplemental appropriation of \$35 million for the project.

The estimated overall project cost is very preliminary and must be refined. This cannot be done until further decisions are made about the project concept as well as the construction delivery mechanism, the scope and timetable of construction, and the need for ancillary work required by the project (e.g., improvements to the Battery Street Tunnel or the City of Seattle seawall, or waterfront mitigation requirements). A plan of finance also must be developed that will define sources as well as uses of funds in the project plan. Sources likely to be considered include state, federal and local funds and a variety of possible toll or other user fee structures.

How can I get more information?

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